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## ***FACT SHEET***

April 23, 2001

### **J.H. BAXTER & COMPANY AGREES TO TEST NEARBY DRINKING-WATER WELLS**

#### ***BACKGROUND***

In an agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), J.H. Baxter & Company will test drinking-water wells near its wood-treating facility in Arlington, WA. The company has also agreed to investigate clean-up alternatives of its site, and will take measures to manage stormwater at the 51-acre facility.

Baxter has operated the wood-treating facility near the Arlington airport since 1970, producing utility poles treated with a preservative called pentachlorophenol (PCP). PCP has been detected in soil samples at Baxter's site, and in a few of the company's monitoring wells. Another wood-preservative substance, creosote, was last used at the site in 1990. Baxter's monitoring data indicate that no creosote has been released at the facility.

#### ***FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS***

##### ***Is Baxter's site a threat to drinking-water wells?***

Baxter believes its operations pose no threat to drinking-water supplies in the Arlington area, based on extensive data from its testing program, initiated in 1988. These data lead the company and its environmental consultants, Hart Crowser, to believe there are no risks to local drinking water from its operations. Baxter's ongoing monitoring program includes 11 monitoring wells, quarterly groundwater testing and sampling of the facility's soil. There are no drinking-water wells within 4000 feet of Baxter's site in the direction of groundwater flow.

##### ***Is contamination leaving the site?***

Although none of its monitoring wells have showed groundwater contamination offsite, the company believes some groundwater contamination is likely to have occurred immediately beyond the site boundary in a northwesterly direction. Hart Crowser believes the extent of this contamination is limited -- samples from a monitoring well beyond the property boundary, in the direction of groundwater flow, have showed no contamination. In concert with the EPA and Washington state's Department of Ecology (WSDOE), Baxter is planning further investigation to determine the extent to which contaminated groundwater has moved beyond site boundaries.

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***What's the source of the contamination?***

Baxter believes the groundwater contamination is coming from historic releases of PCP into the soil at the site, the origins of which are not clear. Documented releases of PCP occurred in 1981 (1400 gallons), 1989 (200 gallons) and 1990 (2000 gallons), each of which was followed by complete cleanup procedures. Stormwater run-off may also be a minor contributing factor, and Baxter is investigating this with the EPA. Evidence also indicates there was contamination of the property by previous owners, prior to Baxter's purchase of the site in 1970.

***What's been done to prevent future contamination?***

Baxter has made significant upgrades to its facility since 1990, including expanded secondary containment around the treatment tanks. Other improvements and preventive measures to prevent spills and other unintended releases of contamination include a new tank farm, roofs over the tank farm and drip pad, recycling and secondary containment for all process solution, and granulated activated carbon treatment for all process water.

***Is the city of Arlington's drinking-water well threatened?***

Baxter and Hart Crowser have a high level of confidence that the company's operations pose no threat to Arlington's drinking water. Based on extensive data from Baxter's 11-year monitoring program on the groundwater flow direction and the distance of the main Arlington well from the source of the contamination, the city's drinking-water source is not at risk from the Baxter site. Baxter is looking forward to working with the EPA to confirm that this is the case.

***Why is PCP used today?***

PCP is a compound with a very long history of use which has demonstrated minimal health or environmental effects when it is properly used. While PCP must be toxic to perform its job of preserving wood against micro-organisms and wood-destroying insects, its toxicity is not unusual when compared to many other compounds, including other wood preservatives. The proper application and use of PCP as a wood preservative results in potential exposures that are very low, and far below levels that have shown any toxic response in test animals.\* Baxter has always used chemicals approved by the EPA as wood preservatives.

***How toxic is PCP?***

While PCP is relatively toxic, as a comparison it is less so than nicotine, chromium and arsenic and more so than ammonia, aspirin, salt and vinegar, all of which are toxic in sufficient doses. At high chronic doses in test animals, PCP has been found to damage several organs, including the liver, kidney and spleen. The EPA has categorized PCP as a B2



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carcinogen (i.e., no evidence of a carcinogenic response in humans, but evidence in animals is sufficient). No studies have linked cancer in humans to PCP exposure. In fact, several epidemiological studies of wood-preserving workers have shown no evidence of increased cancer risk.\*

\*Source: "Pentachlorophenol: The Facts", The Penta Council of the American Wood Preservers Institute, 1997.

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